

GOVERNOR RICHARDSON'S BLUE RIBBON WATER TASK FORCE

2004 Annual Report

December 2004

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Bob Barnes ■ *Elephant Butte*
Larry Blair ■ *Albuquerque*
Consuelo Bokum ■ *Santa Fe*
Stan Bulsterbaum ■ *Deming*
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Frank Chaves ■ *Pueblo of Sandia*
Everett Chavez ■ *Santo Domingo Pueblo*
Wayne Cunningham ■ *Tucumcari*
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Paul Duran ■ *Santa Fe*
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Kyle Harwood ■ *Santa Fe*
Steve Hernandez ■ *Las Cruces*
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Barbara Johnson ■ *Santa Fe*
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Alan Martinez ■ *Taos Pueblo*
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Paul Paryski ■ *Santa Fe*
Hoyt Pattison ■ *Clovis*
Elmer Salazar, *Vice Chair* ■ *Los Alamos*
Cyle Sharp ■ *Estancia*
Manuel Trujillo ■ *Tierra Amarilla*
Bob Vocke, *Secretary* ■ *Santa Fe*
Jack Westman ■ *Albuquerque*

STATE STAFF LIAISONS
John D'Antonio ■ *State Engineer*
Bill Hume ■ *Office of the Governor*
Estevan Lopez ■ *ISC Director*
Anne Watkins ■ *Special Ass't. to the State Engineer*

Introduction

Governor Richardson's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force is a citizen advisory group appointed by the Governor for the purpose of advising the Governor and water-related state agencies on water issues in New Mexico. Task Force members represent a diversity of viewpoints on water from around the state. The Task Force meets monthly to receive briefings on critical water concerns, visit specific locations to more fully understand complex water issues, participate in dialogue with key state agency leaders and decision-makers, and consider and make recommendations on water. The issues considered by the Task Force in 2004 are listed briefly at the end of this report; full minutes of the Task Force meetings are included on its web site, <http://eweb.lanl.gov/blueribbon.htm>.

Recommendations

The key 2004 **priority recommendations** made by the Task Force include:

- Providing funding to convert temporary positions of the OSE to permanent status;
- Restoring funding levels in permanent Rio Grande and Irrigation Works trust funds;
- Providing additional funding for the Pecos River Basin settlement.

The findings were affirmed in September after extensive discussion throughout the year on the water issues facing New Mexico. While the Task Force recognizes that there are numerous significant water issues, the following **consensus** recommendations are considered by the Task Force to be the **highest priorities for action**. These recommendations were presented to Governor Richardson in a meeting in October, 2004 and distributed in written form in December, 2004 to the Governor, State Engineer and the Director of the Interstate Stream Commission as well as to Cabinet Secretaries of the Departments of Environment, Economic Development, and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

- **Provide funding to convert temporary positions of the OSE to permanent status;**
- **Restore funding levels in permanent Rio Grande and Irrigation Works trust funds;**
- **Provide additional funding for the Pecos River Basin settlement.**

Findings Supporting the Recommendations

New Mexico has a finite water supply with significant variability due to semi-arid climatic conditions. This supply is fully appropriated and is subjected to increasing demands e.g., endangered species habitat requirements and growing municipal and industrial uses. **Effective management and administration of the State's water resources based on New Mexico water law is compromised, especially during periods of drought, because of a lack of water resources information and adjudicated water rights.** The State could face dire socio-economic impacts if it fails to meet its Interstate Stream Compact obligations.

The Task Force wishes to emphasize the importance of strong water management to economic development and jobs. In addition to the legal consequences, failure to invest in strong management of water resources has direct economic consequences. When making location decisions, businesses look to certainty, continuity, and commitment. The perception that New Mexico has an uncertain water future could have devastating impacts on the economic viability and future of New Mexico. Requirements and funding for conservation need to be included in the overall water management and financing strategy.

New Mexico must commit now to making investments necessary to proactively manage its water resources for the general welfare of its citizens and in order to assure a stable economic environment for future generations.

The Task Force supports the Priorities, Goals, and Objectives in the New Mexico State Water Plan, adopted by the Interstate Stream Commission in December of 2003:

- Ensuring that water is available for the continued and future economic vitality of the State
- Ensuring a safe and adequate drinking water supply for all New Mexicans
- Developing water resources to expand the available supply
- Promoting conservation and the efficient use of water
- Promoting drought planning
- Protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of the State's waters
- Providing for fish and wildlife habitat preservation and maintenance and for river restoration
- Protecting senior water rights
- Maintaining and enforcing interstate stream compact compliance
- Preserving state administrative authority over the State's waters
- Completing water rights adjudication

2005 – A Look Ahead

During 2005, the Task Force will review and consider recommendations on issues including but not limited to the following: the need for a dedicated revenue source to address water needs; the administrative and governance structure for water management in New Mexico; and interregional water issues.

Summary of Task Force Activities in 2004

Meetings were held monthly for a total of two half-days each month, and alternated between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. In addition, two field trips were taken to the Las Cruces and Farmington areas to study local water issues. The Task Force benefited from tours of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District and of the Navajo Agricultural Products Industries. Over the course of the year, the Task Force received regular updates from the State Engineer and the Director of the Interstate Stream Commission. Other water experts from around the state were invited to the meetings to give additional important briefings; topics and speakers included:

- Butch Blazer, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, *"The Forest and Watershed Health Planning Process"*
- D.L. Sanders, OSE Attorney, *"Water Rights Administration in Times of Drought"*
- Panel Presentation, *"Water Law in New Mexico"*
- Peter Chestnut, Attorney, *"Pueblo Indian Water Rights"*
- Sharon Hausam, Sandia Pueblo Planner, *"Land and Water Use"*
- Ron Curry, Cabinet Secretary of the Environment Department, and Ana Marie Ortiz, Director of the NMED Field Operations Division, *"Environmental Initiatives in New Mexico"*
- Rick Homans, Cabinet Secretary of the Economic Development Department, *"Economic Development Initiatives around New Mexico"*
- Panel Presentation, *"Agricultural Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategies"*
- ISC Rio Grande Bureau Staff, *"Issues Facing the Rio Grande in New Mexico"*
- Charlie Nylander, LANL, *"Los Alamos National Laboratory Water Research Technical Assistance Office"*
- Peter Davies, Sandia Laboratories, *"The Department of Energy National Laboratory Water Technology Research and Development Act"*
- Pat Page, Bureau of Reclamation, *"The Operations of the Navajo Reservoir and Shortage-Sharing Activities in the San Juan Basin"*
- Jim Dunlap, ISC Chair, on *"The Navajo Nation Water Rights Settlement"*
- Beth Bardwell and NM State Representative Mimi Stewart, *"Water Efficient Technology Act"*